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Agricultural Justification for the Erection of a Riding Arena

at

The Farm at Avebury, Galteemore Farm, Beckhampton,
Wiltshire, SN8 1FE

Prepared for:

N Hues & Sons

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Application for Planning Permission for the Erection of a Riding Arena at Galteemore Farm

Design and Access Statement

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Background

The application site is located at Galteemore Farm, Beckhampton, Marlborough, Wiltshire, and is owned by N. Hues & Son (the applicants). The land is currently in agricultural use. The applicants farm in excess of 1000 ha of predominantly arable land in the Beckhampton area.

Galteemore Farm has been farmed by the Hues family since 1922 and lies within the Avebury World Heritage Site, a UNESCO-protected landscape renowned for its outstanding archaeological significance. The surrounding area features some of the country's most iconic monuments, including West Kennet Long Barrow and Silbury Hill, the latter of which is situated adjacent to the farm entrance.

In recent years, the Hues family has successfully diversified the business through The Farm at Avebury, an established rural enterprise offering six stable converted holiday lets, fresh farm produce catering, and two barns available for meetings, events, and functions. This diversification has strengthened the farm's economic resilience and supported the ongoing management of the heritage landscape.

The proposed development, the erection of a new riding arena, represents a further step in the farm's diversification strategy. The arena will provide facilities for both domestic use and existing tourist use. This includes both personal equestrian use and use by the existing clients of the holiday let. This addition will not only provide a unique selling point at The Farm at Avebury but will also contribute to the long-term sustainability of the business.

The development is particularly important in light of recent challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including a significant drop in grain prices and adverse weather conditions affecting crop yields. The proposed riding arena will provide a valuable

supplementary income stream, helping to ensure the continued viability of the farm and its contribution to the local rural economy.

Expansion Process

The Hues family has progressively expanded and diversified Galteemore Farm to secure the long-term future of the business and to adapt to the challenges facing modern agriculture. This process has been undertaken in a measured and sustainable manner, ensuring that all developments complement both the operational needs of the farm and the sensitive landscape of the Avebury World Heritage Site.

The first stage of diversification began with the conversion of redundant agricultural stables into six high-quality holiday lets, forming The Farm at Avebury. This successful venture has contributed to local tourism and provided a stable income stream alongside traditional farming. Further diversification followed with the introduction of on-site catering using fresh farm produce and the adaptation of two barns for events and meetings, providing flexible community and visitor spaces.

The next step in Galteemore Farm's diversification strategy is the creation of the riding arena. The arena will enable year-round use by guests staying in the holiday lets at The Farm at Avebury, as well as personal use by the Hues family.

Throughout each phase of development, the applicants have maintained a strong commitment to heritage preservation, and the careful integration of new developments into the surrounding landscape. The proposed riding arena continues this approach, representing a modest addition that strengthens the farm's economic resilience without taking away from the heritage setting.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision
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PL/2024/09439	Conversion of redundant agricultural building (Building E) to 4 No. residential holiday-let units (Class C3) with associated landscaping works; change of use with associated operational development to convert redundant agricultural outbuilding (Building B) to a mixed-use domestic garage, store and a function space; and change of use with associated operation of existing store (Block Q) to event / social space ancillary to the existing holiday letting use.	Approve with Conditions
20/04347/FUL	Conversion of redundant agricultural outbuildings: (Building J) to 4 No. bedroom holiday-let suites with associated communal facilities and 1 No. self-contained holiday-let unit; (Building N) to farm office; and associated landscaping works.	Approve with Conditions
E/2012/0238/FUL	Creation of access track; installation of 1.2m high gates.	Approve with Conditions

Description of Site

The proposed site at Galteemore Farm lies in Beckhampton, to the southwest of Avebury, at grid reference SU 09021 68589. The site is located to the southwest of the existing farm buildings and will form part of The Farm at Avebury. The holding comprises an arable agricultural enterprise operated by N Hues & Son, extending to approximately 1,000 hectares.

The proposed site for the riding arena is situated on a parcel of land currently used as part of an agricultural field within the established farm holding. The location has been selected to ensure minimal visual impact, as it is not visible from the public highway and is well contained by existing boundary hedgerows and nearby farm buildings. Access to the arena will be provided via the main farm entrance, avoiding the need for any new or additional access points onto the public road.

As the proposed development is to be for both the holiday let clients and personal use, the site will not require any additional car parking facilities. Visitors will use the existing car park associated with the holiday lets to the north of the proposed site.

Access

No new or altered access routes will be required in association with this development. The Farm at Avebury is served by an existing entrance and access track from the A4 between Beckhampton and Marlborough, leading to the holiday let car park. Visitors to the riding arena, being guests of the holiday lets, will continue to use this track and car park.

Parking

No new carparking areas will be required for this development. The visitors to the holiday lets and riding arena will continue to make use of the existing car park located to the south of the holiday lets as shown in Appendix one.

Design of Proposed Development

The proposal involves the installation of an equestrian arena at Galteemore Farm. The development will measure 60m in length by 20m in width, resulting in a gross area of 1,200m². The arena will be bordered by retaining kerbs fixed to posts. The riding surface will comprise a Flexiride all-weather surface on equestrian silica sand laid over a non-woven geotextile membrane. Joints will be taped with heavy-duty cloth tape, and the membrane will be secured to edging boards with tanalised battens to ensure a watertight fit. Beneath this will be a well-consolidated stone sub-base laid on a woven geotextile membrane with 300mm overlaps dressed down into drainage trenches.

Perforated stormwater drainage will be laid to falls, bedded and surrounded in clean washed gravel, and will discharge into the existing storm ditch.

The riding arena is suitably sized and designed from materials which complement the character and appearance of the surrounding area, which ensures it will be typical for this rural location. The proposed development is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, which encourages local planning authorities to support sustainable development in rural areas such the proposed.

Management

The day-to-day management of the proposed riding arena will be undertaken by the management team responsible for The Farm at Avebury holiday lets. Use of the arena will be restricted to guests staying at the holiday accommodation and to the Hues family for private equestrian purposes. The facility will not operate as a commercial riding school, livery yard, or venue for competitions or organised events.

Access to the arena will be coordinated through the existing holiday let management arrangements, ensuring that use remains controlled and compatible with the wider operation of the farm and visitor accommodation. Routine maintenance of the arena surface, drainage, fencing, and surrounding area will be carried out as required to ensure that the facility remains safe, functional, and visually tidy.

This management approach will ensure that the riding arena remains a small-scale and well-managed ancillary feature of the existing rural enterprise, supporting the ongoing diversification of the farm without giving rise to unacceptable impacts on the surrounding area.

Economic Justification

Galteemore Farm has recently secured planning permission to convert existing buildings into holiday-let accommodation, increasing the total on-site capacity to 20 bedrooms sleeping up to 40 guests. In considering the economic justification for the proposed riding arena, an assumed occupancy rate of 65% has been applied, equating to an average of 26 guests staying on site at any one time. On the basis that approximately 15% of guests

may use the riding arena, this would generate demand from around 4 users per day. At a charge of £30 per session, this would provide an estimated gross income of £120 per day, equivalent to approximately £43,800 per annum before operating and maintenance costs. This demonstrates that the proposed arena has the potential to make a positive contribution to the overall financial resilience of the farm's diversified business.

Ongoing costs are expected to be limited, as routine maintenance of the arena will be carried out by the existing holiday let management team as part of the wider operation at The Farm at Avebury. As a result, the proposal is not expected to give rise to significant additional running costs.

Summary

Galteemore Farm is a long-established family-run arable enterprise farmed by the Hues family since 1922 and extending to more than 1,000 hectares in the Beckhampton area. In response to the challenges facing modern agriculture, the business has diversified through The Farm at Avebury, creating holiday accommodation, catering using fresh farm produce, and event space within converted farm buildings. These ventures have strengthened the farm's economic resilience while supporting the ongoing stewardship of this sensitive heritage landscape within the Avebury World Heritage Site.

The proposed riding arena is a modest and appropriate addition to this established diversification strategy. It will provide a facility for personal equestrian use by the Hues family and for guests staying at the existing holiday lets, enhancing the offer at The Farm at Avebury and generating an additional income stream. Sited within the existing farm holding on land currently in agricultural use, the arena will make use of the existing access and car parking arrangements, require no new access points, and be well screened from public view. As such, the proposal represents a sustainable form of rural development that supports the long-term viability of the farm business without harming the character of its surroundings.

Appendix 1 – Map showing proposed development in relation to existing holiday lets

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